China than were the great land masses to the north and west. To the east the only civilized peoples with whom commerce was possible were the Koreans and Japanese. Culturally both of these borrowed from rather than contributed to the Middle Kingdom. The Pacific coast of North America was too far distant to admit of much intercourse by the small ships of the earlier centuries, and until the nineteenth century was sparsely peopled and that mostly by savages. In Southeastern Asia were civilized lands, but the nearest had derived much of their culture from China and so had little to give her. India, the closest great cultural center markedly different from China, was almost as far and as difficult of access by sea as by land. No invasions were to be feared from the ocean, except by pirates, who, while often annoying, never seriously threatened a conquest of the country.

The Chinese were not greatly tempted to become a seafaring people. Until the nineteenth century their own vast land engrossed, as we have said, almost all their energies. North of the Yangtze, where were long the chief centers of civilization, the proportion of coast line to area is small, the connections (by way of the silt-laden Yellow River) between the interior and the sea are poor, and until recently there was scanty reward in commerce with neighboring islands and coasts. The South, supplied with much better harbors, was not fully incorporated into the Empire until the seventh and eighth centuries of the Christian era and even then remained on the periphery of national consciousness. From the South, to be sure, merchants ventured abroad, sometimes to fairly distant parts, and, later, partly because of limited arable land, overseas emigration from that region began. Not until the

nineteenth century, however, did either have a marked effect upon the nation as a whole. China faced north and west, and not south and east.

With the nineteenth century began a great change. The sea, instead of being a barrier and a defense, became a highway and a source of danger. The Occidental, developing larger and faster ships than had ever been known, arrived in force and insisted upon being admitted. Danger still lurked on the north, for an aggressive Russia now threatened, but it had also appeared from the south and the east. The Westerner had penetrated the natural barriers of China, and from a totally unexpected direction. Japan,